DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 630 EA 029 393

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TITLE Conceptions of Democracy: Elements for a Theory of School Political Culture.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 36p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Democracy; *Democratic Values; *Educational Environment; *Educational Objectives; Educational Philosophy; Elementary Secondary Education; *School Culture; *School Role; Student Development

ABSTRACT

The purpose of education in the United States has been linked to democracy throughout its history. An analysis of the tradition of linking education to democratic purpose and practice is presented here. The research was derived, in part, from an earlier study that postulated three conceptions of democracy: liberal, participatory, and community. These three concepts were compared across various elements: beliefs about the nature of individuals and of the masses, government, participation, information access and dissemination, the nature of problems and knowledge, expanse of governance, and value priorities. The text explores linkages among several elements of democracy and their import for developing two typologies of democratic school political culture: community and liberal. The first section elaborates elements for a theory of "community" democratic school culture, whereas the next section focuses on the elements for a "liberal" democratic school culture. A specific case of democratic education is reviewed in light of the elements of democracy. The paper concludes with some thoughts on the complex nature of implementing democracy in schools and the need to begin investigating the concept with greater clarity. Two tables detail the elements of liberal democracy and of community democracy. (Contains 62 references.) (RJM)

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ED 424 630

CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY:

ELEMENTS FOR A THEORY OF SCHOOL POLITICAL CULTURE

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, California, April 13-18, 1998

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Conceptions of Democracy:

Elements for a Theory of School Political Culture

Abstract

This paper builds on a long tradition of linking education to democratic purpose and practice and of exploring theories of democratic education. It was derived, in part, from the findings of an earlier study, which described three conceptions of democracy: liberal, participatory, and community (Dixon, 1997). The contrasting conceptions of democracy provided elements for a theory of school political culture. More specifically, this paper explored the linkages among several elements of democracy and their import for developing typologies of democratic school political culture, community and liberal. The first two sections elaborate elements for theories of 'community' democratic and 'liberal' democratic school cultures. A specific case of democratic education is reviewed in light of the elements of democracy described above. Finally, the paper concludes with some thoughts on the complex nature of implementing democracy in schools and the need to begin investigating the concept with greater clarity.

Conceptions of Democracy: Elements for a Theory of School Political Culture

> We have not, so far, managed to translate the idea of democracy into clear-cut educational theory and practice. There is no more urgent problem on our educational horizon at the present time than the clarification of the meaning and implications of democracy. Bode, 1927, p. 20

The purpose of education in the United States has been linked to democracy throughout its history (Pulliam, 1982; Wood, 1969). Some education scholars (Bode, 1927; Counts, 1938; Dewey, 1916) in the early part of the twentieth century contended that it is only in the fullest participation of all citizens in reconstituting societal values that the essence of democracy could be achieved: "the fullest possible expression of native capacity in the individual," ongoing readjustment of that expression, cooperation based on mutual recognition of interests, and progressive modification of institutions and practices" (Bode, 1927, p. 14). Such a definition implied beliefs about the desirable nature of participation and about positive human disposition toward, and capacity to, change; it also presumed that mutual interest (i.e., common good) is identifiable, that it can supersede self interest on a regular basis, and that institutional structures can and should reflect such beliefs. Elected officials and the judicial branch were thought to be part of the equation, but only a part. Schools, among other patterns of organization, were also important in achieving democratic purpose. As Dewey (1916) noted, "democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 87). School elements, some democratic proponents argued, must emulate structures and practices that reflect and/or produce democratic elements such as cooperation, unity around common interests, and self-improvement. More recent scholars (Beyer, 1996; Carr & Hartnett, 1996; Elshtain, 1995; Glickman, 1998; Gutmann, 1987; Hepburn, 1983; Hudson, 1998; Hyland, 1995; Schultz, 1998) have echoed similar themes, among others.

One of the difficulties of translating democratic theory into educational practice and improving practice through such theory, however, has been the *vague notions of what democracy means, the lack of linkage between different elements within conceptions of democracy, and the contradictory nature of some elements within a particular conception of democracy*. For instance, Glickman (1998) identified three characteristics of democracy: equality, liberty, and fraternity (p. 3). Yet, it has frequently been noted that equality and liberty are unfriendly bedfellows (Gutmann, 1987; Hayek, 1960; Hyland, 1995; Oliver & Shaver, 1966). Moreover, what type of equality is at the core of democracy? Should and/or can democratic schooling promote or reflect, literally, equal rewards or equal opportunities, in spite of differences in effort or family circumstance of individuals or other factors? Furthermore, how well does liberty to compete and to gain from unequal effort or merit affect fraternity or unity of purpose? Such confusion muddles already murky waters.

Gutmann (1987), like Glickman, offered a democratic theory of education, claiming that "a society that empowers citizens to make educational policy, moderated by [the principles of 'nonrepression' and 'nondiscrimination'] realizes the democratic ideal of education" (p. 14). She wrote that the principle of nonrepression prevents any group or the state from restricting "rational deliberation of competing conceptions of the good life and the good society" (p. 44). The principle of nondiscrimination prevents any group or the state "from denying anyone an educational good on grounds irrelevant to the legitimate social purpose of that good" (p. 45). Gutmann's phrases within these definitions—"educational good," "irrelevant to the legitimate social purpose," and "rationale deliberation"—while vague, point to underlying beliefs in an open and inclusive process of participation. She also maintained that this type of political process

produces "conscious social reproduction in its most inclusive form" (p. 42). Thus, Gutmann promotes nonexclusive participation as the highest instrumental value in a democracy.

Wood (1969) documented that the theory of American democracy has coalesced from fragmentary theories. In particular, he concluded that it evolved from an ongoing revision of theories—an English Whig "theory of government" (p. 18), a "theory of virtual representation" for the common interest (pp. 175, 178), a "theory of mixed government" (p. 209), "constitutional theory" (p. 151), a radical Whig theory in Pennsylvania (i.e., maximum participation) (p. 228), "theories of a constitution" (p. 283), a "theory of sovereignty" (p. 354), a "Republican theory" (p. 410), a theory of human nature (pp. 479, 489), an "elitist theory of democracy" (p. 517)—into a "distinctly American political theory" (p. 562; see also "kinetic theory of politics," p. 605). Democratic theory has continued to evolve through the efforts of American society to meet new needs and to counter undesirable outcomes. A theory of American democracy has been shaped through continual evaluation of prior democratic notions. Democratic ideas and ideals have also been applied and reapplied in schools more recently to improve practice (Beyer, 1996; Glickman, 1993, 1998; Hepburn, 1983; Mattern, 1997).

This paper builds on a long tradition of linking education to democratic purpose and practice and of exploring theories of democratic education. It was derived, in part, from the findings of an earlier study, which described and categorized three conceptions of democracy: liberal, participatory, and community (Dixon, 1997). The three conceptions of democracy were contrasted across eight elements: beliefs about the nature of individuals and of the masses, government, participation, information access and dissemination, the nature of problems and knowledge, expanse of governance, and value priorities. Three prominent democratic education

reformers' ideas (Glickman, 1998; Levin, in Hopfenberg, et al., 1993; Sizer, 1996) were evaluated using a matrix derived from the elements of different conceptions of democracy as a critical lens.[1] The results suggested that the three reformers' ideas reflected primarily a community conception of democracy. But more importantly for this paper, the analysis suggested that the conceptions of democracy provided elements for a theory of school political culture. Thus, the contrasting democratic conceptions have implications for investigating types of democratic schools and comparing the outcomes of contrasting practices. Hyland (1995) has emphasized the importance of such theoretical research.

> [T]o produce evaluative appraisals of possible forms of social organization...in an orderly and coherent fashion, we need ways of describing and comparing these possible structures that do not already presuppose an evaluation of them, though our concepts need to highlight...those features of social organisation that are likely to be relevant to evaluative appraisal. (p. 68)

Specifically, this paper explored the linkages among several elements of democracy and their import for developing typologies of democratic school political culture, community and liberal. The first section elaborates elements for a theory of 'community' democratic school culture. The next section discusses elements for a theory of 'liberal' democratic school culture. A specific case of democratic education is reviewed in light of the elements of democracy described above. Finally, the paper concludes with some thoughts on the complex nature of implementing democracy in schools and the need to begin investigating the concept with greater clarity.

A Theory of Community Democratic School Political Culture

Dixon (1997) identified eight elements of community democracy, which equate here to elements for a theory of school political culture. The research sources for various elements of the

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[1]See Dixon (1997) for methodological considerations.

community conception of democracy and the description of its eight elements are noted in Table 2 (see Appendix). In this conception, school participants *believe that the potential for intellectual, social, and moral development is unlimited among all individuals* and is cultivated best through extensive engagement in self governing tasks across diverse social groups. Extending this element to its fullest extent in schools, then, would include administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students engaged in decisions related to a wide assortment of school issues. The following quotes from Glickman and Levin exemplify the belief in unlimited growth among students.[2]

> In my own experience, I know of perceived 'slow' children who became incredibly intelligent, successful people. But they never would have excelled unless the adults around them had refused to accept the label given to them. Instead these adults treated them as having as much promise as anyone else. (Glickman, 1998, p. 48)

> Accelerated schools have high expectations for all children...have a vision and clear goals for making all children academically able...create powerful learning experiences to accelerate the progress of all children. (Levin, in Hopfenberg et al., 1993, p. 17)

Moral and social development is thought to be achieved through cross cultural interaction and decision making opportunities. VanSickle (1979) discussed the likelihood that "widely distributed participation" patterns and mutual respect for potential contributions of different status groups promote decisions that "are likely to be correct more often than when one person decides alone" (p. 2). Moreover, he suggested that current stereotyping, based on race, sex, or ability, appears to prevent such patterns and inhibits the healthy development of all persons' fullest potential in school, especially with regard to performance evaluations (self and others), participation rates, and student productivity (p. 29). Other scholars (Dewey, 1916; Dryzek, 1996; Kerr, 1996;

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[2]See Dixon (1997) for more elaborate documentation of the conclusions drawn here.

Putnam, 1995) have emphasized the relationship between nurturing communities and individual development as well.

In the community democratic school culture, beliefs about the development of individual potential is intertwined with norms and *beliefs related to maximizing participation and restricting government influence*. When individuals participate in making decisions, they are believed to learn from the experience and to develop greater capacity to participate. Glickman (1998) wrote that participation should include teachers sharing decision making with administrators on issues as far ranging as curriculum, personnel, and budgeting, among others. Moreover, he and Sizer (1996) discussed the critical role students can and should play in directing the activities and focus of the classroom and in participating in school-wide programs. Hyland (1995), among others (Apple & Beane, 1995; Held, 1987; Pateman, 1970), suggested that individuals must participate in four "moments" of decision making, including agenda setting, deliberation, choice, and implementation to reach their fullest potential. Collaboration and cooperation among all individuals impacted by decisions is crucial too. Within this paradigm of shared governance, community democratic theorists believe that mutual interests (i.e., the common good) are identifiable, and that all directly affected must achieve voice and have power to influence the process and outcome for this to occur. An example from the Accelerated Schools Project demonstrates some of these connections.

> One of the most notable and important changes in Burnett since it began the process of acceleration is the participation of the whole school community in making important decisions that will lead to their common vision. In all areas of the school, teachers, support staff, administrators, students, parents, and the local community are contributing their energies, opinions, and expertise to solve challenges confronting Burnett. [One participant reflected:]...it's the communication that makes everything happen. [The ASP] gave us a

> way of communicating...gave us a way of bringing all of the ideas of everyone together. (Levin, in Hopfenberg et al., 1993, p. 44).

Relying heavily on government or representatives to make decisions for the whole community, according to community democrats, arrests the fullest development of all individuals. It also circumscribes the full array of school decisions in which individuals may address and impact (e.g., curriculum, scheduling, budgeting) when participating fully. Also, community democratic education reformers believe government should not play a large role in school decision making because they maintain that individuals, locally situated, have the capacity and desire to participate, and will benefit by doing so. Relying on government has other undesirable consequences: the decisions made are out of touch with school conditions and realities; decisions are unresponsive to or not solicitous of school personnel's ideas on needed reform; decision makers are unrepresentative of a particular student population (the 'needy') or beholden to special interests (advocates of students with disabilities or school personnel lobbies). For example, Levin (in Hopfenberg et al., 1993) wrote, "Instead of simply complying with 'downtown' decisions made without staff input, accelerated school communities systematically define their own challenges and search out unique solutions that will work for them" (pp. 17-18). Sizer (1996) posited that current priorities, efficiency or maximizing government control over schools, against values such as effective schooling defined by local school communities is problematic; government is not accountable nor responsive to what he considered to be the 'most relevant' school constituencies—families and school professionals in local schools; government reforms are not significant enough to ameliorate school problems; government heavy-handedness has resulted in

consensual illegal and duplicitous activity by school personnel, which, in turn, has led to less effective school practices. The following quote reflects some of these beliefs.

> The fact remains that those most involved in the debate over public education appear to agree that the local and state board of education and the administrators who work for them, long entrusted with accountability, do not serve that function well.... A wise resolution will require a new balance of authority between families and government, with a significant tilt toward the former, and a respectful acknowledgment and accommodation of the diversity within our society. (Sizer, 1996, p. 38)

As Levin alluded to above, the *nature of problems and the knowledge* to solve those problems, in the community democratic school culture, are believed to be rooted in the specific circumstances and value priorities of local communities. Thus, school participants most intimate with school conditions, relationships, personalities, and cherished goals and "challenges" are best able to identify potential sources or causes of problems and to locate relevant knowledge to address those problems. Expertise is at least partly the result of the knowledge of local circumstance, but may also come from more general sources (e.g., research) to be tailored to, or dismissed, to meet the locally defined initiative.

Widespread *information access and dissemination* is crucial for everyone directly impacted by decisions, working collaboratively and cooperatively, to solve problems or to improve conditions for learning and governing. Glickman's (1998) "critical study process" (or action research) (p. 55) and self-selected membership task forces, or Levin's "inquiry process" and "cadres," are inclusive information gathering and disseminating groups and activities that address school-wide problems among the school community. At the classroom level, the three reformers emphasized that because societal problems are complex, traditional subject-centered studies are not appropriate. Sizer (1996), for instance, suggested that students should be expected to engage in

interdisciplinary problem solving (p. 53). Glickman (1998) proposed that students should also learn by actively engaging problems in the community and by locating resources outside the school. Furthermore, he suggested that rather than using mimeographed sheets, workbooks, or textbooks, students should have access to "computers, telephones, literature, and reference materials" (pp. 37-38). Glickman proposed that "[democracy as a] powerful theory of education [included] the need for learners to actively participate in diffusing and constructing knowledge" (p. 9). Thus, democratic education entails greater participation among students in classrooms and in the school community at-large, and widespread participation across these schools, which shape how problems are defined, what knowledge is relevant, and who is privy to information.

The community democratic school culture also includes small-scale governing institutions. When schools are small in *size*, according to community democratic theory, they can maintain the conditions necessary to maximize participation and to modify school practices more flexibly. They provide a manageable forum to locate common problems and the knowledge relevant to those problems and their solutions. Small schools also permit participants to access information and disseminate it across the local school community. Importantly, small-scale school conditions refer to both school-wide numbers and student-teacher classroom ratios.

"Human scale" places (Sizer, 1996) are also connected to particular *values* most cherished in the community democratic conceptual scheme. For instance, small-sized populations are believed to create a personalized learning environment, which promotes the optimum conditions to achieve the fullest possible development of human intellectual, moral, and social capacity. It is suggested that values such as nurturing others and community, collaborative and cooperative problem solving, shared understanding, dilution of status constraints, and the development of a common

history are possible more so in small than larger populated arenas. Sizer (1996) was the most adamant about achieving "small-scale" learning environments as the following quotes suggest.

> The faculty is small enough to find within itself a sense of community. That faculty and the principal have extraordinary freedom to shape their school in ways that they and their community want, rather than march to a standardized system developed elsewhere. This allows them, as a result, to narrow their work to essentials, to run a school so simple in its construction that it can bend to the needs of particular children. (Sizer, 1996, pp. 23-24)

> Bigness all too readily signals a need for order—crowd control, some call it—and order all too usually implies standardized routines and a rule driven, impersonal school culture. [Young adolescents] need much more than this, however, including sensitivity of a particular sort—sensitivity that recognizes and respects the extraordinary physical and emotional changes that most of them are experiencing. (Sizer, 1996, p. 31)

Both Sizer and Glickman praised small-sized schools and student-teacher ratios because they permit the establishment of personalized relationships and trust (Sizer, 1996, pp. 91-92; Glickman, 1998, p. 163). Some students have reinforced this conclusion (Tashlein, 1997). Moreover, Sizer (1996) implied that "small schools [promote] higher achievement among students" (p. 94). And Glickman (1998) concluded that small schools enable the faculty "to sit together around the same table and make plans for and with their students" (p. 40); to plan opportunities for "team teaching;" to construct an interdisciplinary curriculum; and to develop "standards and reports of student performance" (p. 41). Glickman did caution, however, that small schools, together with school autonomy, did not automatically lead to "change or improved education," merely that it established the conditions "conducive to change" (p. 41). Levin (in Hopfenberg et al., 1993) noted that small schools "permit the individual attention that each student needs" (p. 12) and promote student connectedness "to the school family" (p. 41). He also asserted that a school with too many students may raise faculty concerns about discipline

problems (p. 220) and negate effective communication in classroom activities as happened in an ASP school (p. 309).

A theory of community democratic school culture, thus, contains the following propositions:

- All individuals have unlimited potential for intellectual, social, and moral development.
- Local school communities have the capacity and willingness to collaborate in decision making and to be able to reach consensus around common aims on a regular basis.
- Government (local school boards, state, federal) should support school initiatives and protect individual rights—but not mandate the specifics of local school policy.
- All in the local school community, but particularly the school staff, parents of children in schools, and students (i.e., all most directly affected by school decisions), should participate broadly in, and possess authority over, their own school decisions.
- Educational problems, and the knowledge to address those problems, are rooted primarily in local school circumstance and value priorities.
- Information related to school problems and their resolution can and should be accessible and disseminated to all at the local school.
- Smallness, both school-wide and student-teacher classroom ratios, promotes the best conditions (most democratic) for learning and personal growth.
- The most cherished values include: non-governmental collective action, open dialogue, cooperative and collaborative problem solving across diverse demographic and social groups, dilution of status constraints, development of common history, nurturing others and community.

A Theory of Liberal Democratic School Political Culture

Elements of a theory of liberal democratic school culture contrast sharply with the community democratic culture across most theoretical elements—limited role of government, the sole exception. It reflects a pessimistic view of human nature, among other factors, that discourages widespread, indepth, local participation in school decision making. In the liberal democratic theory, participation is also self-limiting due to the complex nature of problems and the knowledge necessary to solve problems and to govern. An elite, possessing the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions, is believed to produce the best decisions (most democratic) for society. The complexity of problems and knowledge, along with human nature, also limits information exchange. Limited and divided government (structure and function) is necessary to protect individuals, one from another and from government itself, and to legally bind and enforce collective decision making—not to support individual growth or local school autonomy. Large-scale governance provides the greatest potential for effective and optimal decision making. Values such as limited government ('negative liberty'), individualism, competition, stability, order, security, private property, and Constitutional law tied to freedom from government are the most cherished. These ideas, and their linkages, are elaborated in more detail below.

The liberal democrat's notions that ***human nature*** is principally depraved, self indulgent, unequal, unmotivated to learn, among other negative characteristics, and that society is incomprehensibly complex, are related to and define the orientation of many of the other elements within the liberal democratic culture of schools: limited participation, role of government, nature of problems and knowledge, information exchange, scale of governance, and value priorities. Political philosophers and theorists such as John Locke, James Madison, Walter Lippmann,

Joseph Schumpeter, among others (see Pateman, 1970), have identified multiple reasons that widespread participation in decision making is unrealistic or detrimental due to the problems inherent in human nature. Schumpeter (1976) claimed that 'the people' lack motivation outside their area of interest or experience. Sartori (in Pateman, 1970) posited that citizens are, by nature, reactive not proactive (p. 10). Eckstein (in Pateman, 1970) asserted that "men have a [psychological] need for firm (authoritarian) leaders and leadership," and a desire to maintain stability and avoid conflict (p. 13). Locke (in Lasett, 1960) spoke to the need for a "social contract" (i.e., constitution, representative legislature, and law) borne from the enormity of human weaknesses and limitations: selfishness, ignorance, apathy, whim, passion, ambition, and discontent (pp. 316, 320, 243, 246, 348, 371, 374-75, 395-396, 404, 410, 462-463). Publius (in Rossiter, 1961) echoed many of Locke's sentiments. Lippmann (1922, 1225) has also enumerated a long list of human limitations. For example, he lamented that citizens cannot be everywhere and experience everything; they naturally have to rely on the 'facts' presented by others: "the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance" (1922, p. 11; also see Downs, 1957, "uncertainty," "selection principles," and "rational decision making").

If human nature and societal complexity circumscribe expansive citizen *participation,* then how are decisions to be made? In a liberal democratic culture, 'the people' elect representatives who make decisions for society. Elections decide who controls decision making since forming policy based on consensus over 'the common good' is unrealistic (Lippmann, 1922, 1925; Publius, in Rossiter, 1961; Schumpeter, 1976). Elections turn on limited competition, however, due to several factors: the two party system; the predominance of well-financed organizations, which vie for power; limited resources, incentives or interest to organize on the part of the public; the

"ideology of individualism, free enterprise, localism, [and] privacy and economy in government" (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 6).

Government representatives, in turn, are chosen based on several possible factors. Schumpeter (1976), for instance, maintained that representatives are chosen on the basis of a competitive struggle for the peoples' vote. Publius (in Rossiter, 1961) wrote that elected representatives are selected based on their greater wisdom, patriotism, and "love of justice" (p. 82). Lippmann (1922) posited that the imaginative leader (i.e., elected representative) capitalized on popular symbolism and coalitions, and offers policies in line with such symbolism (p. 133; see also Lippmann, 1925, pp. 46-53; Schattschneider, 1960). He also maintained that experts and their organizations were critical to assist elected representatives make decisions. Elected representatives, then, act as the peoples' trustees until the following election. Broader participation is limited primarily to discussion around issues provided by elites and voting periodically. Too much participation, "orthodox theorists" posited, would promote instability (in Pateman, 1970, p. 1).

Widespread participation is also limited due to inherent human limitations in *information* processing, gathering, and analysis, and due to the *nature of problems and knowledge* (Downs, 1957; Lippmann, 1922, 1925; Publius, in Rossiter, 1961; Schumpeter, 1976; Yankelovich, 1991). Problems are viewed as complex and their solutions are to be sought in specialized knowledge with particular emphasis on technical rationality and value neutrality. Since problems are rooted in values and citizens disagree on value priorities, political elites compete to offer the public a limited range of choices. Public problems are simplified, therefore, through electoral organization and definition. Knowledge is also defined through disciplinary expertise (e.g., "contextual

knowledge") (Downs, 1957). Information access and dissemination are both limited due to the need for technical mastery and an ideology of privacy and limited conflict (e.g., value priorities such as order, stability, and privacy) (Schattschneider, 1960). Moreover, Downs (1957) maintained that economic rationality and pervasive uncertainty, limit the acquisition of information through "selection principles," based on division of labor and ideological attachment (p. 229).

Another element in liberal democratic theory, *larger territorial and demographic expanse of governance*—though limited in scope, is critical in tempering the potential for majority tyranny (another human vice), expanding the election candidate-pool of wise and virtuous leaders, and limiting the possibility for political corruption (Publius, in Rossiter, 1961). Large-scale governance encompasses a large number of factions, and thus, diminishes the influence of any one—"a cabal"—over public decisions or elections. It protects the rights of vulnerable minorities in a heterogeneous society. Moreover, a heterogeneous society, according to Berelson (in Pateman, 1970), also contributes to system flexibility (p. 7). A larger sphere also makes it more difficult for "unworthy candidates to practise with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried" (Rossiter, 1961, p. 82).

Many of the *values* most cherished in the liberal democratic culture were elaborated in the forgoing discussion. Highly cherished values such as limited government, government provided security, and protection from government tyranny (liberty), individualism, stability, order, private

property, competition, and Constitutional law, receive the most emphasis. These values differ substantially from the value hierarchy in the theory of community democratic school culture.[3]

A theory of liberal democratic school culture contains the following propositions.

- Only an elite has the intellectual, social, and moral capabilities to make school decisions.
- Competitive and free elections over a large governance zone produce the best decision makers and permit the most important school issues to be addressed.
- Government powers (local school boards, state, federal) should be limited and divided, and should codify decision making into law, enforce laws, and protect individual rights.
- Problems and the knowledge to address problems are best identified through scientific investigation using contextual knowledge (subject matter expertise) and information.
- Information access and dissemination is limited to an elite due to intellectual, social, economic, and moral constraints, among other human limitations.
- Large schools, both school-wide and student-teacher classroom ratios, promote the best decision making in, and operation of, schools.
- The most cherished values include: limited government, government provided security, individualism, order, stability, private property, and competition.

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[3]The elements for a third theory of school political culture, participatory democracy (Dixon, 1997), share some of the features of the liberal and community democratic theories, but can be contrasted against them in important ways too. In brief, its major differences from the theories elaborated in this paper consist of a belief in widespread participation in the decision process, especially in elections, the positive use of government to provide more equitable conditions—economic, educative, political—for all citizens (i.e., "positive liberty"), the co-equal value of cooperation and competition, the contested nature of problems and knowledge, the greatest opportunities for information exchange result from completion between political parties, and the benefits of small and large-sized governance units.

Contrasting Conceptions of School Political Culture and Democratic Praxis

Having described elements of contrasting conceptions of democratic school cultures, liberal and community, it may be useful to evaluate a description of democratic school practice given by a contemporary reformer in light of the elements. Specifically, this section will review Mattern's work with college students. The analysis may give us greater clarity in reflecting on, and implementing, democratic school frameworks.

Mattern (1997) experimented with implementing "democratic education" while teaching a democratic theory course at Chatman University. He defined democratic education as that which "involves increasing the level of personal responsibility assumed by students and giving the students real decision making authority without threats of punitive reactions by the instructor" (p. 510). Initially (through week four), Mattern performed in the "traditional" role of college instructor, "lecturing and leading discussions" and possessing sole authority to make decisions for the class (p. 511). Soon thereafter, "students elected five representatives who were charged with the responsibilities of approving or rejecting the final draft of the syllabus-constitution" (p. 511). Power over class and course decisions then shifted more to the students.

From weeks four to eight, the student representatives possessed authority to initiate and to decide policy. Mattern retained an executive role to veto acts of the representative body (and to initiate policy), but the elected representatives could "override" Mattern. The class had procedures to amend the syllabus-constitution (two-thirds vote of the class). The student representatives also appointed members of a "Supreme Court who were charged with maintaining consistency between class decisions and the constitution" (p. 511). By week eight, Mattern had completely resigned his executive role in decision making, retaining only a single vote, equal to

that of any student (though he did serve as final arbitrator in appealed course grades). The students amended an early draft of the constitution to disallow all students to participate in all decisions in the class, providing the elected representatives with such power only, this to prevent the class from assuming an "even more chaotic form [than] it sometimes did in representative form" (p. 511).

Some of the most interesting outcomes Mattern noted were that students provided multiple avenues to demonstrate learning, "fine tuned the evaluation process," and spent time on evaluating the course design and process in terms of democracy. Mattern was not as "sanguine" as the students though when evaluating their grasp of learning democratic theory, the focus of the course. Most students did not read the assignments (i.e., "a solid majority...completed only 50-75% of the readings;" presentations reflected "a substantial lack of preparation;" and "there was a slight amount of grade inflation;") (p. 512). On the positive side, Mattern indicated that some students did a substantial amount of work in 'evaluation committees,' charged with assessing peers in terms of class work ("participation, presentations, journals, and papers"); students were also given some choice in the evaluative mix given to their own individual products, so they could "play to their own strengths" (p. 512). Two major sources of concern, to Mattern, were the need for more expertise (his) in evaluating student work, and the failure of students to grasp basic democratic problems (i.e., inequality in United States democracy and the relationship between power and participation). Significantly, while Mattern maintained that he is uncertain "how much of the substance of democratic theory students learned in [his] course," he is as unclear how well students learn the material in "a traditional teaching approach" (p. 514).

Mattern's description of democratic school practice demonstrates the complexity of defining and applying any one particular conception of democracy. While Mattern was willing to grant all students in the class the opportunity to participate fully in every decision made in the class, the students themselves voted to strike that clause and to limit participation primarily to elected representatives, at least partially due to fear of disorder. Unfortunately, Mattern does not describe the manner in which these representative were chosen, the special qualifications, if any, necessary to "run" for election, if candidates for the five seat council differentiated themselves from one another (e.g., political party attachment)--permitting *real choice*, and thus, as Dahl (1989) would maintain, authentic elections. It is interesting, too, that initially at least, Mattern appears to value an open and fully participatory process whereby students can make decisions for themselves concerning class activities, structures, and processes, but upon evaluation of student self-assessment and grasp of content, he suggests that students do not have the expertise to evaluate "other students work" (p. 512). Mattern sees this as an inherent tension in trying to establish a democratic classroom, shifting power to students while maintaining "rigorous academic standards, [a democratic necessity, to Mattern]" (p. 513).

Clearly, Mattern's internalized struggle is reflected in the contrast between the liberal and community democratic notions of human nature, who should participate and how, and the nature of problems and knowledge and how these notions played out in the class experiment. Moreover, while Mattern's students demonstrated an attachment to community democratic values such as open dialogue, cooperation and collaboration, etc., (see Table 2), they seem more concerned with order. The results of the students' self evaluation and work suggested, too, that students did not fulfill their responsibilities as Mattern had hoped. Also, it is hard to say what might have been the

implications had a student felt slighted by a grade assigned him or her, and complained to Mattern's superiors about the process or content of the course. Mattern does not address the larger political context or constraints in which instructors work. Democratic elements from the two conceptions such as number of students in the class, their demographic makeup, and/or information access and dissemination are not clarified, and therefore, could not be evaluated.

While brief, this analysis suggests that implementation of particular conceptions of democratic education may be aided by a model that addresses a full range of elements inherent in theories of democracy. Mattern's experiment, and others (case studies in Beyers, 1995, and Hepburn, 1983) can serve as grist for the analysis mill to come to a better understanding of the elements that should be reflected upon when attempting to implement democracy in the classroom. Even more, if we are to calculate, describe, compare and/or contrast the effects of various conceptions of democracy on desirable school outcomes, then we must more accurately or concisely define the elements our models seek to approximate.

Conclusion

The concern expressed by some early twentieth century democratic school reformers continues to occupy the agenda of contemporary educators. Beyers (1996) has written that "we cannot hope to really educate public school pupils...if we do not clarify the meaning of genuinely democratic communities and how they can be developed (p. 15). Mattern (1997) has asked "Is the classroom appropriately democratized? To what extent, and in what ways?" (p. 510). Hahn (in Hepburn, 1983) has prodded schools to get on with the task of educational democratization, citing research that demonstrates its success (p. ix). Interestingly, the examples of democratic organization and practice exemplified in Mattern's recent "experiment," compared with those

described in Beyer's Creating Democratic Classrooms or in the examples provided by Hepburn (1983), demonstrate the contrasting meanings of democracy that individual educators assign. Some of these differences may stem from their dissimilar disciplinary training and socialization; Mattern is a political scientist; the others are social studies or social science educators. The democratic processes, values, and structures these teacher-scholars emphasize and attempt to implement also may differ based on their experience at different school levels. Mattern teaches college students; Hepburn's contributors practice principally in high and middle schools; Beyer's democratic teachers are largely settled in elementary schools. Thus, the nature of students (and teachers), among other contextual factors, at different levels of schooling may complicate an already difficult task of getting at the meaning of democratic schooling, its assumptions, practices, and desired outcomes. Nevertheless, the typology of democratic school cultures presented in this paper may help us to analyze the practices of educators and to begin to identify empirical evidence of a commitment by particular schools (or school districts) to a specific type of democratic classroom or school. Moreover, schools, if granted the freedom by more powerful political entities, may begin to explore different types of democratic school organizations to allow comparisons across cultures in terms of specific outcomes. To paraphrase Bode, *the time is now to clarify the meanings and implications of democratic schooling*.

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Appendix[4]

Table 1

Elements of the Liberal Conception of Democracy

Elements of Conceptions	Research Conclusions	Research Sources[5]
Nature of Individuals and Masses	No common will; ignorant and unmotivated to learn outside area of interest or experience; limited capacity to understand real world complexity—proclivity to distort based on personal experience and values; prone to unreflective, passionate action; apathetic; reactive, not proactive; psychological need for authoritarian leaders; need for stability, coherence, and simplicity; incompetence unremediable; unequal; selfish, whimsical	Schumpeter, 1976; Lippmann, 1922, 1925; Berelson, Sartori, and Eckstein, cited in Pateman, 1970; Shaver and Larkins, 1973; Schattschneider, 1960; Downs, 1957; Adams, cited in Shaw, 1976; Madison and Hamilton, cited in Rossiter, 1961; Hayek, 1960; Locke, cited in Laslett, 1960; Plato and Machiavelli, cited in Held, 1987

[4]The following Tables are taken from Dixon (1997).

[5]The researchers listed here do not all subscribe necessarily to all the characteristics listed in any particular element. However, the combination of characteristics is useful to distinguish between different conceptions of democracy and to build a theoretical model for each based on general orientations (e.g., emphasis on nature versus nurture in human development).

Views on Government[6]	Negative; limited scope (free markets emphasized); freedom threatening; primary role—protection of Constitutional rights and private property; necessary primarily for community decision making (establish laws) and execution of laws	Hayek, 1944; Locke, cited in Laslett, 1960; Madison, cited in Rossiter, 1961; Montesquieu, cited in Held, 1987
Information Access and Distribution	Limited due to experiential constraints, complexity, time constraints, potential for misinterpretation, bounded social relationships, protection of self or community interests or of cherished values or beliefs, competition, cultural norms (ideology of privacy)	Lippmann, 1922, 1925; Downs, 1957; Schattschneider, 1960; Schumpeter, 1976
Mode of Participation	Highest level of participation in government decision making (and in competition to rule) limited to political and expert elites; mass participation limited to elections, primarily voting and discussion around ideas proposed by elites; ideology of limited public sphere, organizational complexity, costs of participation, and procedural rules on governing scope lead to elite rule; two party system limits scope of issues considered and influence	Schumpeter, 1976; Berelson, Sartori, and Eckstein, cited in Pateman, 1970; Schattschneider, 1960; Downs, 1957; Madison, cited in Rossiter, 1961; Plato, cited in Held, 1987

[6]The term government was defined in this study to include only elected officials and court judges or justices. While one can argue that the term government might include all state employees (e.g., teachers or others in public schools), the rationale here is that only those officials intricately involved in political elections and or party politics, and who have legal standing to make, or to interpret the constitutionality of law, represent the state in the strictest sense. Elected officials, in turn, are legally accountable and responsive to the general public, at least in theory. Moreover, judges and justices are required to be responsive to laws made by those elected officials and are accountable for this to continue in office. The author recognizes that this distinction in terminology is somewhat tenuous but legitimate and helpful for the purposes of this analysis.

Nature of Problems and Knowledge	Problems are complex, thus, decision making limited to experts (specialized knowledge, emphasis on technical rationality, value neutrality); problems rooted in values and citizens disagree on value priorities , thus, decision making limited to elites who compete to promote limited range of value priorities; problems simplified by electoral organization and definition; knowledge is tied to science or disciplinary perspective	Lippmann, 1922, 1925; Schattschneider, 1960; Downs, 1957; Locke, cited in Laslett, 1960; Madison, cited in Rossiter, 1961; Schumpeter, 1976: Wilson, 1887
Size of Territory or Population	Large sphere of rule (combined with elected representation) prevents tyranny; large sphere of rule protects heterogeneous views and values; large sphere promotes election of virtuous, disinterested leaders	Madison, cited in Rossiter, 1961; Dahl, cited in Pateman, 1970
Value Priorities	Freedom from government ("liberty"); limited scope of government; individualism; system stability; order; security; competition; private property; Constitution law tied to freedom from government	References in elements cited previously in Table 1

Table 2

Elements of the Community Conception of Democracy

Elements of Conceptions	Research Conclusions	Research Sources
Nature of Individuals and Masses	Shaped by the environment (e.g., economic self sufficiency, opportunities to participate and to be educated, non discriminatory or repressive laws); individuals and society can reach increased levels of intellectual, skill, and moral development, become more responsible, more capable and confident to participate, more considerate of the interests of all (recognizing interdependence or common good); environment is shaped by wide-ranging types of institutions ("associations") (e.g., families, churches, schools)	Rousseau and Wollstonecraft, cited in Held, 1987; Cole, cited in Pateman, 1970; VanSickle, 1979, 1983; Dewey, 1916; Barber, 1988; Kerr, 1996; Gutmann, 1987; Paley, 1995; Apple and Beane, 1995
Views on Government	Neutral or emphasized less than inclusive private associations	Dewey, 1916; Dryzek, 1996; Barber, 1988; Putnam, 1995
Information Access and Distribution	Limited only by relevancy to problem solving and individual privacy considerations	Hyland, 1995; Marx, cited in Held, 1987; Cole, cited in Pateman, 1970; Held, 1987; Thoreau, 1849/1993, 1854/1993, 1859/1993; Gutmann, 1987; Dewey, 1916; Kerr, 1996
Mode of Participation	Equal effective rights for all affected by decisions to participate (quantitative and qualitative)—including maximizing total participation throughout four "moments" of decision making (agenda setting, deliberation, choice, and implementation); collaborative participation of experts and general public through committees or public forums; problem solving collaboration across demographic and social groups	Hyland, 1995; Marx, cited in Held, 1987; Rousseau and Cole, cited in Pateman, 1970; Dewey, 1916; Barber, 1988; VanSickle, 1979, 1983; Kerr, 1996; Apple and Beane, 1995

Nature of Problems and Knowledge	Problems are complex; their solutions are rooted in technical knowledge, knowledge of local circumstance and individual experience, and local community value priorities	Yankelovich, 1991; Paley, 1995; VanSickle, 1979; Kerr, 1996
Size of Territory or Population	Small size permits opportunities for personalization and nurturance, common understanding, problem solving and collaboration, open dialogue, flexibility	Dewey, 1916; Meier, 1995; VanSickle, 1979; Kerr, 1996
Value Priorities	Non-government collective action; shared understanding, open dialogue, cooperative and collaborative problem-solving across demographic and social groups; dilution of status constraints on collaboration (emphasis on equality); development of common history, and nurturing others and community	References cited previously in Table 2